

## **From the Regimental Command Sergeant Major**

Hello from the Home of your Regiment! I hope everyone has had a great and safe summer so far. In addition to relaxing by the pool sipping an iced tea, I encourage all of our Military Police Warriors around the globe to take the time to reflect on our great history and look forward to celebrating 68 years as a professional Military Police Corps. We have come a long way and even though we are looking down the road of change, we are in great shape and have a very bright future. Thank you for all you do.

The first group of heroes I would like to acknowledge is our great men and woman standing in the sand looking the devil in the eye. Those of you in harm's way answering the nations call, and those of you preparing to go next are priority number one. Our thoughts and prayers are with you and your families.

I would be remised if I didn't take the time to recognize the great people behind the scenes of the "most professional Regimental Association in our Army, MPRA". My peers often ask me how we do it and I have to tell them, it's all about pride and finding volunteers that love the Regiment enough to invest their time and energy into the family. Well, we are fortunate enough to have just that. From the President of MPRA to the Editor for Retiree Affairs, all volunteers and some of the most professional Military Police men and woman we could ask for. Please learn all you can about this great organization and join the team. Once you educate yourself on all the good things MPRA does, I am convinced you will become a member if you are not already. Explore the opportunity to start or grow your local chapter in this "Year of the Local Chapter".

In this edition I would like to highlight pride.

Recently here at Fort Leonard Wood I had the privilege of presiding over a "Year of The NCO" ceremony in recognition of Pride in Service. I would like to take this opportunity to share my remarks with you as a way of saying thank you for all you do. You have every reason in the world to be proud of who you are as a servant to our nation whether still in uniform or not. During the ceremony we also took the time to make a presentation to the state of Missouri Patriot Guard for their continued support to our Soldiers, families and nation. The below remarks have been abbreviated.

"I'm a Noncommissioned Officer and I'm proud! I'm proud of you and your service to the greatest nation on earth while wearing this Army uniform!

And today I want to thank you for your service.

Today's NCOs are accomplished military professionals who have combined civilian and military educational opportunities to become the Army's preeminent body of leadership.

NCOs are known as the "backbone of the American Army" and are the standard keepers for the military - training, leading, coaching and mentoring of Soldiers.

The NCO Corps provides invaluable service and sacrifices in the line of duty and continually prove their dedication and their willingness to make great sacrifices on behalf of our nation.

I don't think anyone here today will argue that this war we are engaged in today is a Squad Leaders fight.

Today I plan to take you off the beaten path and remind you of why you should be proud of who you are and what you represent.

We are not alone on this journey of service and I want to remind everyone of the patriotic American citizens and families that stand by our side in times of challenge and in times of triumph.

You see, Pride is an emotion in my opinion. It's not anything that I can issue you a certificate for.

It's not something you can direct on someone or muster in your own sole without connection to a higher purpose or calling.

Pride is the tightness in your chest and the lump in your throat that you experience when the national anthem is played at a local event and men and woman of all ages and backgrounds come to their feet united to honor our nation.

To some it may just be the song of our country played before sporting events, but you know better. You know it represents freedom paid for with the blood of our ancestors, comrades and even some of you.

Pride is the connection you feel to the American people when a stranger reaches out of nowhere grabbing your elbow to gain your attention and simply states "Thank you for your Service"

Pride is the feeling your Son or Daughter has when they go out of their way displaying their brand new My Mommy serves in Afghanistan T-Shirt at day care or school after receiving it in the mail.

No concept of time, distance or your mission, simply pride and love.

Pride is the feeling your father or grandfather has as he sits in the local watering hole or VFW boasting about how his Son or Grandson was just promoted to Private First Class as though he is next in line to be the Sergeant Major of the Army.

Pride in your service.

Pride is displayed by the elderly gentleman in the dog food section of Wal-Mart wearing his Korean War Veteran hat as though he is in a parade on main street America.

He wants to tell his story so take the time to stop, say thank you for paving the way and listen.

I want to remind all of you today that what you do for your nation is remarkable and I hope you are as proud of yourself as the American people are proud of you.

Noncommissioned Officers have been contributing to the legacy of our Army and service to our nation for years.

Sergeant's Alvin York and Audie Murphy are two examples that almost all Americans will recognize in conversation even if they don't know the specifics of their legacies.

Today the American people see our Noncommissioned Officer heroes in news footage leading the charge in Afghanistan and Iraq.

They don't see or hear the names of our heroic NCOs such as the one that led BG Phillips into the ruins of the Pentagon on September the 11<sup>th</sup> 2001.

BG Phillips tells the story with such pride that when he returned to the area of the Pentagon where he worked, just after American Airlines Flight 77 claimed the lives of his co-workers, he was met by an NCO.

The only words out of the NCOs mouth were follow me!

General Phillips did just that.

Unfortunately they did not find any survivors but he did retrieve the most precious symbol of our freedom and that is this very set of U.S. colors behind me. (on stage)

I share that story with you and display this set of colors because every time I hear him tell the story, I can feel the pain through his recollection but what resounds is his pride that he found something good on that day of devastation.

His charge is as long as he has these colors they will be present where ever good things are happening for Soldiers.

Well today good things are happening.

They don't see the daily good deeds and sacrifice of our NCOs like this great NCO on that day.

They read the names in casualty reports in local newspapers and local television broadcasts highlighting that young man or woman that used to walk past their house everyday as a youngster on his way to school 10 or so years ago.

They feel the personal connection since we all come from their communities.

They are proud of your service and so should you.

Recently BG Phillips, Chief Williams and I had the high honor of attending one of our young fallen MPs funerals in Oklahoma.

Although certainly a sad occasion for the family members of this young fallen warrior, the prideful outpouring of the community was overwhelming.

We made it to the church that morning about one hour before the service.

A quiet morning without much activity, we brought our uniforms inside and we changed for the service as people started to trickle in to pay their respects.

We met with the family up stairs and BG Phillips presented the mother and father with their Sons awards and we thanked them for their great sacrifice.

Although sad you could see the pride in their hearts through their eyes as they told us how he loved serving his country and how proud of his service they were.

Following our meeting with the family we walked down stairs and it was if the community surged and the building came alive.

As we stood there in our class A uniform on the sidelines, I was approached by a woman who thanked me for my service. She then pulled out a photo of her Son in uniform wearing his flight suit telling me how he was a helicopter pilot and was killed in Afghanistan two years earlier.

I asked her if she knew the family of the fallen Soldier we were honoring that day and she said no but felt the connection and just wanted to be there in support of them and all Soldiers still in harm's way.

As she went on to tell her Sons story she actually started beaming with pride, highlighting his service and not his death.

Pride in Service!

Outside was a large flat bed trailer with a replica of the liberty bell on the back with an elderly gentleman pulling a rope sounding the bell in an almost somber yet patriotic rhythm as though he was calling all veterans home.

I later had the opportunity to talk with him learning that he volunteers his time to travel around the country at his own expense honoring our fallen at funerals such as that one that day.

Simply a prideful American showing his respect in support of our fighting men and woman.

Pride in Service!

Young men and woman in cadet uniforms, men and woman of all ages wearing ribbons, military insignia and red white and blue, and it dawned on me that out of all these people only a handful were actually family and friends of the fallen.

Everyone else was a proud American there out of respect for our Soldiers, grateful and proud of our service.

Needless to say that I was very proud that day as I am everyday to serve my country.

Following the service we climbed into our van and drove out to the cemetery to meet with the funeral detail prior to the remains and family arriving.

Not long after arriving, off in the distance you could hear a rumble that was growing louder and louder.

A familiar song heard across our country played by 100 or so patriots blowing through those beautiful musical instruments made by Vance and Hines.

Then you could see it....American flags flapping in the wind carried by a proud Patriot Guard chapter, in formation, columns of two for at least a mile in front of leading our fallen comrade to his final resting place.

All dressed in biker regalia, men and woman riding tall in the saddle as if they were going off to battle themselves. They do it out of pride, support of our fighting men and woman and love of country.

True Patriots every one of them honoring our men and woman in uniform rain or shine.

Pride in Service!

I recall one particular rider and Patriot that morning at grave side as he stood in front of me. He was a rather large gruff looking fellow and I noticed on the back of his vest he had a large patch that simply stated..."My Daughter is a Marine".

He stood there silent and as he turned in my direction I could see the tears beaded and glistening in his beard.

There is no doubt in my mind who was running through his head at that moment in time.

You could feel his Pride, commitment to supporting our troops and the possible sacrifice of his own daughter as she serves our nation.

Well today, I am going to take advantage of having a group of these true patriots in our presence and we are going to take the time to say thank you for all you do to honor our Soldiers here at FLW at welcome home and departure ceremonies, memorial ceremonies and the funerals of our fallen in the great state of Missouri.

If I could please have all of our Patriot Guard Riders in the audience stand. Ladies and gentleman, please join me in a round of applause thanking these outstanding Americans.

Ladies and gentleman, fellow noncommissioned officers, I ask you to remind yourself everyday that the American people are proud of your service to this great nation.

I also ask that you represent yourselves like the professional ambassadors you are.

I'm proud of each and every one of you and I am forever grateful for the support we receive from patriotic organizations such as the Patriot Guard and the American citizens.

Always keep our brothers and sisters currently in harm's way in your thoughts and prayers and take the time to stop and tell the Army story the next time that unsuspecting supportive citizen reaches out of nowhere and grabs you by the elbow.

Of the Troops and for the Troops, NCOs lead the way.” (End of ceremony remarks)

Well there you have it. It really is that simple. As complex and technical as our profession can be, it all boils down to the great men and woman in uniform and all those that support us. Please maintain your perspective and apply the life lessons like those I illustrated above to your daily lives. By doing so you will grow personally and professionally and the team will ultimately benefit from your contributions.

I am extremely proud to be a member of your team and I look forward to seeing as many of you as I possibly can throughout my travels. Please stay connected to the Regiment and continue to contribute to our great success.

“Of the Troops and For the Troops” “ NCOs Lead the Way”  
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Regimental Command Sergeant Major Charles R. Kirkland